

African Americans, Diabetes, and Heart Disease: How to Beat the Odds

by the National Diabetes Education Program



African Americans are at increased risk for type 2 diabetes, and two out of three people with diabetes die of a heart attack or stroke. This is serious business. But you can work to beat the odds. You can take action to help prevent heart attack and stroke.

For people with diabetes, a key to preventing heart attack and stroke is to control the ABCs of diabetes: blood glucose (“sugar”), blood pressure, and cholesterol. A is for the A1C, a test measuring average blood glucose control over three months. B is for blood pressure. C is for cholesterol.

Take control. Ask your health care provider what your ABC numbers are, what they should be, and what you can do to reach those goals. And during American Heart Month, the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) offers some lifestyle tips for how people with diabetes can help prevent heart attack and stroke and live a long, healthy life.

- **Be physically active everyday.** Playing sports, dancing, walking, or even doing household chores help you lose weight and lower your blood pressure. Aim to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity, most days of the week.
- **Eat less fat and salt.** Instead of reaching for the salty fries, choose a side salad.
- **Add more fiber to your diet** by choosing whole grains, vegetables, and beans.
- **Stay at a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese is a risk factor for heart attack and stroke.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking is one of the major risk factors associated with heart attack and stroke. Ask your health care provider for help to quit.
- **Take your medicines as prescribed.** Also ask your doctor about taking aspirin.
- **Ask for help.** A little encouragement and a support go a long way. Ask your family and friends to help you stay on the right track.

The NDEP’s *Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes* campaign offers tools to help people with diabetes and their loved ones control their diabetes and prevent heart attack and stroke. Visit NDEP online at www.ndep.nih.gov and click on the *Be Smart* logo for more information.

The National Diabetes Education Program promotes awareness of the ABCs of diabetes through its Be Smart About Your Heart. Control the ABCs of Diabetes campaign. The US Department of Health and Human Services’ National Diabetes Education Program is jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC) with the support of more than 200 partner organizations.

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